

THE MOCKING TRADITION BEHIND CHARLIE HEBDO

The magazine is the heir to a French school of thought that has made fun of religion from Catholicism to jihadism

BY CAROLINE WEBER

THE SATIRICAL weekly Charlie Hebdo was the conscious heir to a French intellectual tradition with a long history: radical anticlericalism.

Before the Charlie Hebdo era (the magazine dates from the late 1960s), France's most influential anticlerical thinkers trained their fire on Catholicism—for centuries the country's state religion. As a rule, however, these individuals objected not so much to precise points of religious doctrine as to the fanaticism, ignorance and persecution that, in their view, tended to accompany "true faith." The opponents of doctrinaire Catholicism used caricature, irony and humorous blasphemy—thus setting the tone for Charlie Hebdo's later fight with jihadist Islam.

Anticlerical French thought traces its origins to ramblunctious early Catholic practices such as Carnival, in which Christian morality was temporarily and gleefully suspended, as well as to Renaissance literary representations of priests as importunate louts. In François Rabelais's "Gargantua" (1534), the eponymous hero rails against monks because they "neither plow, like the peasant, nor heal the sick, like the doctor" but instead "harass the whole neighborhood by rattling their church-bells" and mumbling "countless legends and psalms they don't even understand."

Anticlericalism reached its apogee

during the Enlightenment. Brandishing finely honed logic and wicked humor, the *philosophes* gleefully mocked what they saw as the inconsistencies and absurdities of Church dogma. Voltaire excelled at this technique. In his novella "Tingénu" (1767), a gaggle of small-town priests and parishioners decides to convert an Amerindian "savage"—only to see their plan go comically awry when the newcomer makes a quick study of the Bible and then demands that they comply with all of its directives, from circumcision (generally dismissed by Voltaire's contemporaries as a "Jewish" practice) to baptism in a river (rather than at a baptismal font).

Writers like Voltaire gleefully attacked Church dogma.

In Voltaire's satirical "Dictionnaire Philosophique" (1764), he imagines a theological debate between a *philosophe* and a religious zealot. When the former carries a point by citing ecclesiastical authorities, his opponent replies, "Come, now. Neither they nor God will stop us from burning you alive."

That's the punishment for...philosophers who don't share our opinions." Voltaire himself escaped destruction by fire, but the Church condemned his "Dictionnaire" and other works to the flames.

The Marquis de Sade took "enlightened" anticlericalism to even more shocking extremes. His novels portray monasteries as hotbeds of frantic buggery. One novel, "La Philosophie dans le boudoir" (c. 1793), reviles the Virgin Mary as a "dirty, shameless slut" and Jesus Christ as a "scoundrel," a "creep" and a "despot." Unsurprisingly, these pronounce-

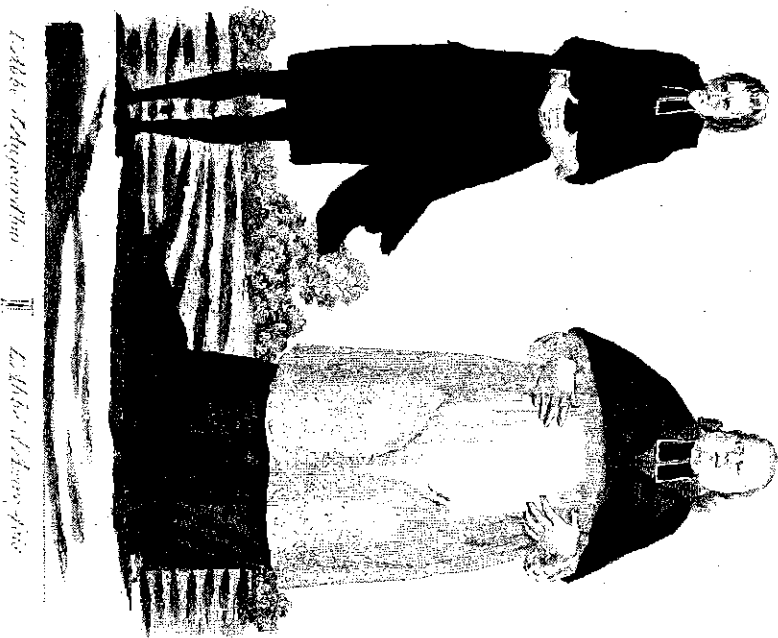
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Universal History Archive/Getty Images



AN ANTICLERICAL caricature, c. 1754, shows an abbe fattened by corruption.

ments landed Sade in serious trouble. To this day, he remains the only French author to have served prison time under four successive political regimes.

After World War I, the French Surrealist movement revived Sade's legacy and made him a hero of avant-garde rebellion. They found in Sade a bracing antidote to

the Duc de Biangis, emerging from an orgy dressed as Jesus Christ. When the film came out, this scene so outraged Catholic sensibilities that an extremist youth group staged a riot in the movie theater, tossing tear-gas bombs and beating up members of the audience.

For all their focus on militant Islam, the editors of Charlie Hebdo, as heirs to this tradition, didn't give Catholicism a pass either. One of the weekly's more graphic covers—a response to the rejection of gay marriage by the archbishop of Paris, André Vingt-Trois—shows the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in a lewd ménage à trois beneath the caption: "Msgr. Vingt-Trois Has Three Daddies." But as the magazine's director, Stéphane Charbonnier (better known to readers under his pen name Charb), noted in 2012, his paper's anti-Catholic caricatures never triggered the kind of violent backlash generated by its anti-Muslim ones: "We could show the pope sodomizing a mole and get no reaction."

It is a key point. The imperviousness of modern-day Catholics to Charlie Hebdo's brand of satire is itself a by-product of French anticlerical culture. After more than 500 years of ridicule, Catholicism has finally become "banalized" (that is, lost its status as a taboo subject), in a neologism coined by Charb himself in 2012. He went on to say, "We have to keep at it until Islam is as banalized as Catholicism." Charb was among those murdered on Wednesday.

Dr. Weber is a professor of French at Barnard College. Her books include "Terror and Its Discontents" and "Queen of Fashion: What Marie-Antoinette Wore to the French Revolution."

When Art Is Dangerous (or Not)

WWT
11/11/15

OPINION

BY TIM KREIDER
The author of "We Learn Nothing," a collection of essays and cartoons.

THE only time art ever seems to make news here in the West any more is when a Pollock or Warhol sells for a sum commensurate with the budget of a "Transformers" film. It seems bizarre, then, to find ourselves grappling with international crises in which art is the issue.

I was bemused by the imbrogllo involving the Sony movie "The Interview," then horrified by the massacre at Charlie Hebdo in Paris. The incomprehension, whether bemused or horrified, that we feel toward people who take up arms against the purveyors of cartoons or comedies is a chastening reminder that there are still cultures in which art is not a harmless diversion or commodity, but something real and volatile, a potential threat to be violently suppressed. These attacks are, in a way, a savage, atavistic show of respect.

I was a cartoonist for The Baltimore City Paper from 1997 to 2009, so I well know what influence a political cartoonist wields in this country. The last time art had any real-world effect on United States politics was about 140 years ago, when Boss Tweed was not only driven from power by Thomas Nast's caricatures of him but ultimately arrested after he'd fled to Spain, where he was recognized from those same cartoons.

Much as I admire Steve Bell's caricatures of George W. Bush as a dung-flying chimpanzee, it's hard to imagine them landing the former president in The Hague. I have to wonder whether any of my colleagues felt the same queasy mix of emotions I did on hearing about the assassinations in Paris: beneath the outrage, sorrow and solidarity, a small, irrational twinge of shame that we're not

doing anything worth shooting us over. Kurt Vonnegut Jr. likened the cumulative firepower of all the art and literature directed against the Vietnam War to "the explosive force of a very large banana-cream pie — a pie two meters in diameter, 20 centimeters thick, and dropped from a height of 10 meters or more." A lot of artists in America tend to be self-deprecating fatalists, because we've grown up in a culture in which art doesn't matter except, occasionally, as a high-end investment. When art has been controversial here it's most often been be-

Could a cartoon alarm anyone in the U.S.?

cause it's deemed obscene. (Say is our tawdry Muhammad, the thing that cannot be depicted.) But it's hard to think of a time in our history when art gave any cause for alarm to anyone in power.

It's a testament to the brittleness and fragility of ideologies like the thugish cult of North Korea and the more nominally liberal sects of Islam that they respond to art most Westerners regard as silly and trivial: dumb comedies, crude cartoons. North Korea saw "The Interview" as some sort of invidious state-sponsored attack on its revered leader, the cinematic equivalent of a dirty bomb. It was almost endearing; you wanted to explain to them, No, see, in our country, this is stupid art. We weren't even going to go see it in theaters until you threatened to bomb them; we would've waited for it on instant streaming. Some part of the international reaction to the Charlie Hebdo massacre

was this same kind of condescending incredulity: Wait, this was about cartoons?

It speaks well of our own relatively flexible system that it can accommodate criticism and dissent without lopping anyone's hands off. But this is also a backhanded testament to our society's successful denaturing of satire, and the impotence of art in our own culture. Autocrats from Plato on have advocated control and censorship of the arts to ensure the stability of their states, and micromanage their people's inner lives. In the mature democracies of the West, there's no longer any need for purges or fatwas or book-burnings. Why waste bullets shooting artists when you can just not pay them? Why bother banning books when nobody reads anyway, and the national literature is so provincial, insular and narcissistic it poses no troublesome questions?

The real Machiavellian genius of the First Amendment is that free speech turns out to be mostly harmless — a lot of P.C. nit-picking, dingbat conspiracy theories, tedious libertarian screeds and name calling. The only "free speech" that has any effect in a stable, well-run plutocracy is the kind protected by Buckley vs. Valeo in the form of campaign contributions.

American capitalism has its own ingenious system for neutralizing or absorbing dissent: Any art that challenges its fundamental assumptions, its inevitability and rightness, is either ignored (with the artist eventually forced to fend bar or learn graphic design), or, if it becomes successful, is so lavishly rewarded that it becomes painlessly welcomed into the system it criticized. As systems of oppression go, the latter is definitely the

one you want to suffer under. I'm relieved to live in a place where the worst thing I have to worry about is being called names on the Internet. Being paid only 20 bucks a week for my political cartoons was kind of insulting, but at least I wasn't forced to eat them at gunpoint.

I don't mean to romanticize what happened in Paris: It was obscene and stupid and sad. And yet there is also occasion for pride in it, the kind of somber pride any soldier is entitled to feel in a comrade's sacrifice. It is a reminder that art is not a frivolous diversion, not just a product or "content." It is still alive and dangerous, and still hated and feared by those most deserving of our contempt and mockery.

A lot of people are calling the cartoonists of Charlie Hebdo "heroes," which it's hard to imagine happening while they were still alive. (Would Seth Rogan be one if the North Koreans poisoned him?) But if grown-ups are going to use a word as childish as "hero" at all, then I'm afraid we may have to apply it, now and then, not only to those uniformed few who control drones from Langley or Vegas or bust teenagers selling weed on the street but also to silly, irrelevant people like cartoonists.

Last week, we quietly added a few more names to the roll call. And tonight, in the real ceremony my colleagues and I will salute them with the traditional instruments of our trade — glasses raised around tables in the bars and cafes and tea houses of the civilized world. And, after a few, we'll do what cartoonists do — make cruel, gleeful fun of the attackers, of Islamic wackos and right-wing bigots, opportunistic politicians and useless cartoonists. No one will be spared.

OPINION

WSS
1/10-11/15
Salman Rushdie, Meet Charlie Hebdo



DECLARATIONS
By Peggy Noonan

It was a sunny Tuesday in London, Valentine's Day 1989. The phone rang in the novelist's home. It was a BBC reporter. At first he was irritated. She

didn't even bother to tell him how shield gotten his private number. "How does it feel," she asked, "to know that you have just been sentenced to death by the Ayatollah Khomeini?"

"It doesn't feel good," Salman Rushdie, said, *I am a dead man*, he thought.

In a daze he walked around closing shutters, locking the front door. Witnessing his own fear he decided to keep a commitment to do a television interview. When he left the house he didn't know it would be three years before he entered it again.

Free speech is more than a tradition. It's the basis of civilization.

Walking into the studio he was handed a printout of the edit just released by the supreme leader of Iran: "I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of the 'Satanic Verses' book, which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Quran, and all those involved in its publication, who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death. I ask all the Muslims to execute them wherever they find them."

Mr. Rushdie read it. The interviewer asked him to respond.

"I wish I'd written a more critical book," he said. He was ever after proud he said that, though in future

years he occasionally wobbled under the pressure, as one would. And so began his roughly 10 years in hiding, with heavy police protection, under an assumed name "Joseph Anton," which is what he called his 2012 memoir, from which the above is taken.

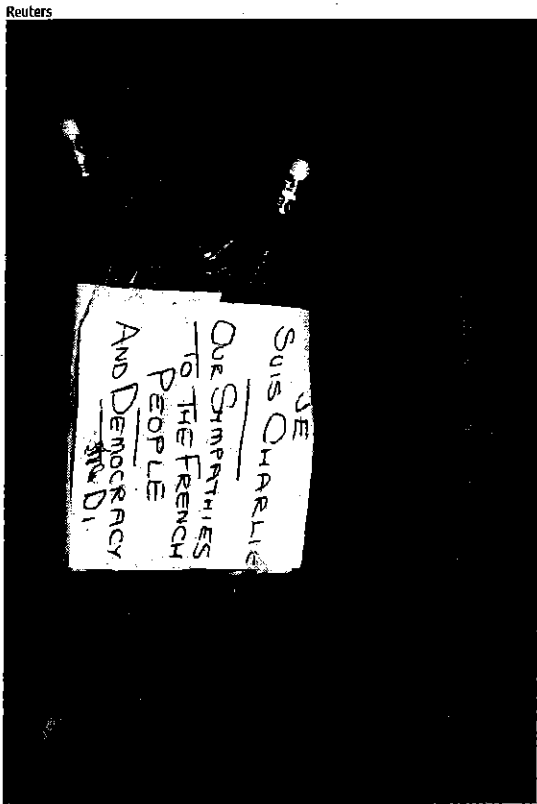
Salman Rushdie had written a novel critical of Islam, and so he had to die. It was the first famous fatwa in the West.

I was a writer and producer at CBS News in New York, and I remember the general American reaction, which was bafflement: *They're threatening an artist for producing art? Who are these people?* In the publishing world Mr. Rushdie's became a celebrated cause, but to others he was not an entirely sympathetic figure—arrogant, a snooty lefty hurrle who wrote a rude book about the faith of his fathers and now they're coming down on him like a ton of bricks. Remind me why I care?

Looking back, he was the canary in the coal mine. Theo van Gogh, the Dutch filmmaker and writer, was shot to death on the street and almost decapitated in November 2004, after his short film on women and Islam was broadcast on television. His collaborator, Ayvan Hrist Ali, got death threats and eventually fled to America. Kurt Westergaard, the Danish cartoonist who drew Muhammad with a bomb hidden in his turban, was a target of two assassination attempts and had to go into hiding.

And now the atrocity in Paris. Extremist Muslim fanatics cut down 12 people at the offices of Charlie Hebdo magazine. Their crime too was insulting Islam.

What do we know now that we did not know when Mr. Rushdie was targeted? That extreme, militant Islamists continue to clash with the liberal West. That the West must see to it that its values are not compromised by the fears the murderers seek to spread.



Outside the French Embassy in London on Wednesday.

Charlie Hebdo magazine has struck me as aimed at the immature, or at least the not fully formed. Its cartoons and other humor are broad and vulgar, even primitive, not witty or sly. The magazine delights in crudely, grossly insulting all faiths, especially Islam. But as a Westerner would say, so what? It has been alleged by a few people that the staff of Charlie Hebdo brought the tragedy on themselves. That is exactly what was said of Salman Rushdie, that he shouldn't have written such an offensive book.

Maybe it would be instructive to look at how we in the West handle what is rude and unpleasant and offensive.

First, our freedoms are not merely our "traditions," our "ways," "reflexive of Enlightenment assumptions" or "very pleasant." In America especially they are everything to us. Here freedom of expression is called free speech, and it is protected in the first of the Constitution's amendments because it is the most important of our rights.

of the virtues because without it none of the others are possible, the First Amendment protects the freedom upon which all others depend. Without free speech no difference of opinion can be resolved, no progress made in the law or in politics, no truth found and held high, no scandal unearthed and stopped.

But free speech takes patience. It requires us to hold our temper and give each other plenty of room in which to operate.

This is how we deal with offensive speech:

In the late 1980s, Andres Serrano produced "Piss Christ," a photograph of a small crucifix submerged in the artist's urine. That didn't go over well with a lot of Christians. They wrote op-eds, protested peacefully, and criticized the National Endowment for the Arts for subsidizing the work with tax money. The arguments were vigorous. But the protests were peaceful, and no one even dreamed of harming the artist.

In the late 1990s it was Chris Offili, whose painting "The Holy Virgin Mary" depicted Mary surrounded by pornographic images and smeared with elephant dung. When it was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum it didn't go over well with Catholics, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. The museum received public money. There were protests and arguments, the mayor withheld funds, the museum sued him and won. No one ever dreamed of harming the artist.

We resolve these things peacefully in the West. And this is not only "tradition." We know on some level that this is how civilization keeps itself together. I remember long conversations during these controversies in which people tried to view the provocative works charitably. Maybe the artist is trying, awkwardly and imperfectly, to say something big and even good? Maybe he's trying to say: "You say you love Christ but you don't honor him." Maybe he's trying to say, "You say you honor Mary, but in your own actions and lives you cover her not with glory but dung." Or maybe the artists were just talentless hacks producing the only thing they were good at: publicity.

The point is people considered and debated. They didn't pick up a gun. A singular feature of extremist Islamists is that they are not at all interested in persuasion. They don't care about winning you over, only about making you submit. They want to menace and threaten. They want to frighten. They enjoy posing with the severed head.

It is the West's job not to be overcome by fear, not to give an inch. Steady is the word.

Tracked down by a reporter for Deutsche Welle after the Charlie Hebdo massacre, Kurt Westergaard offered his wisdom. He said the murderers were "fanatics." He told the media "not to be afraid" and not to "surrender" free speech. And he said he hoped for "a reaction from the moderate majority of Muslims against this attack."

That majority actually exists, and should step forward.

Can Government Play Speech Favorites?

Most legal fireworks these days surround the limits of political speech, but what happens when local governments put their heel on other kinds of public speech? That's the First Amendment question Monday when the Supreme Court hears oral argument on whether governments can play favorites when regulating speech.

In 2004 Pastor Clyde Reed of the Good News Community Church in Gilbert, Arizona, posted signs inviting residents to worship with his small congregation of a couple dozen adults. The church held services in different buildings around the area, so Pastor Reed used temporary signs to let people know where to go. In a typical week he would place about a half dozen signs on public property.

Under town regulations at the time, however, religious signs could only be posted 12 hours before the promoted event and had to be taken down no more than one hour afterward. The town sent Pastor Reed two letters telling him to stop. Repeatedly failing to obey the regulation could result in fines up to \$2,500 and jail time of six months.

The church sued on grounds that the regulations governing its signs were significantly more stringent than those governing political signs, which could stay up for months before an election and weeks afterward. The difference amounts to government giving preference to certain speakers over others, violating the Supreme Court standard that speech regulation must be "content neutral."

When the case began, the town's ordinance only applied to signs of religious assembly. It was later amended to include some nonprofit

groups. But why create any sub-categories? If the government interest is in furthering safety and reducing curbside clutter, the town could simply limit the total number of signs.

The Supreme Court can clear up legal confusion that politicians exploit.

The expectation that government shouldn't consider the content of speech when regulating it has been around for four decades. In 1972's

Police Department of Chicago v. Mosley, the Supreme Court ruled that a school ban on picketing outside the school could not make a special exception for union picketing.

In a 1996 article in the *University of Chicago Law Review*, then law professor (now Supreme Court Justice) Elena Kagan wrote that regulators aren't inclined to admit an unfriendly motive in content-based speech regulation, so courts sometimes must work "to flush out illicit motives and to invalidate actions infected with them."

Seven federal appellate courts are now in conflict over judging the legality of content-based regulation, with the First, Second, Eighth and Eleventh circuits ruling that such regulation should be subject to "strict scrutiny," meaning the regulation must be narrowly tailored and show a compelling government interest. The Third, Sixth and Ninth circuits require "intermediate scrutiny," which means the government need only provide an "important" interest.

The latter standard gives governments too much leeway to regulate speech they dislike. The current Justices can extend their laudable record of First Amendment jurisprudence by underscoring the constitutional principle that even-handed regulation must apply to any kind of speech.

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United in Outrage

The solidarity march of more than one million people in Paris on Sunday was rich in placards and symbols but appropriately devoid of speeches. Like many in the vast throng that filled the broad boulevards between Place de la République and Place de la Nation, the world leaders who marched a portion of the route with President François Hollande locked arms and embraced. But there was no podium, no pulpit, only ubiquitous signs reading "Je suis Charlie." For the moment, that said it all.

Charlie, as the world has come to know, is Charlie Hebdo, the satirical weekly tabloid that was attacked by two radical Islamist gunmen on Wednesday. An apparent ally of those gunmen allegedly killed a policewoman and burst into a kosher supermarket in Paris, murdering several people there. In the end, 17 people and the three terrorists were dead, and "Je suis Charlie" swiftly became a declaration of solidarity and grief, displayed on kiosks, armbands, headbands, TV screens and banners.

There were some other signs, too — "I am Charlie, cop, Jew" read some, and many displayed a simple pencil, symbol for the freedom of expression that came under attack when the brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi massacred cartoonists and editors at Charlie Hebdo, evidently because the magazine had published cartoons satirizing the Prophet Muhammad.

There's much that can and should be discussed as a result of the tragedy — about freedom of the press, about the growing backlash across Europe against Muslim immigrants, about Islamist terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Certainly many of the dozens of national leaders in the Paris march — including the leaders of Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Greece — could have said plenty. Many of their countries have known vicious terrorist attacks in recent years; many are contending with rising anti-immigrant movements. The White House will gather leaders in

Washington next month for a summit meeting on preventing terrorism, the American attorney general, Eric Holder Jr., announced.

But with the horror and fears raised by the attacks still fresh, it was important and proper that the first response in Paris — as elsewhere in France, across Europe and across the Atlantic — was a resounding and united demonstration of outrage and solidarity. Simply by turning out in vast numbers, the marchers eloquently demonstrated a shared conviction that Charlie Hebdo was exercising a right fundamental to democracy, the right of free expression. No perceived provocation, no grievance and certainly no religious conviction justifies killing those who wield only a pen.

The Charlie Hebdo murders are certain to intensify exploration for effective ways to combat terrorism. The probability that one of the Kouachi brothers had trained with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and was on American watch lists should prompt a search for better cooperation and communication among Western allies and new ways to deal with the veteran jihadists who return to Europe after training and fighting with groups abroad.

Perhaps the greatest danger in the wake of the massacres is that more Europeans will come to the conclusion that all Muslim immigrants on the Continent are carriers of a great and mortal threat. Anti-immigrant sentiments were already at a dangerous level, making it essential for national and pan-European leaders in coming days to underscore that extremism is not inherent to the Muslim faith, and that the Islamists themselves are hardly a single entity.

That point was searingly made by the brother of Ahmed Merabet, a French police officer who was one of the people gunned down in the Charlie Hebdo attack. "My brother was Muslim," said Malek Merabet, "and he was killed by two terrorists, by two false Muslims."

Firebombing Hong Kong Democrats WSS 1/13/15

Hours after world leaders and three million demonstrators declared "Je suis Charlie" in France, masked assailants in Hong Kong threw Molotov cocktails at the home and office of pro-democracy media magnate Jimmy Lai. While the attacks caused no casualties, they underscore the urgency of Hong Kong's fight for freedom.

Mr. Lai has long faced physical and commercial intimidation. In 2008 police foiled a plot to assassinate him and Democratic Party founder Martin Lee. In 2013 suspected gangsters crashed a car into the gate of his home, leaving behind a machete and axe.

Thugs have stolen and torched copies of Apple Daily, the pro-democracy tabloid published by his company, Next Media. Firms with business in mainland China have pulled advertising from his publications, while hackers have stolen his files. One hack last summer led Hong Kong's anticorruption bureau to raid his home and open an investigation into his donations to pro-democracy politicians.

Such abuse is why Reporters Without Borders now ranks Hong Kong 61st in global press freedom, down from 18th a decade ago—the sort of institutional erosion that motivates the city's democracy movement. As student-led democrats took to downtown streets last September in what became a 75-day protest, the 66-year-old Mr. Lai was with them.

Soon Apple Daily was hit by more cyberattacks. In early October mobs surrounded the newspaper's offices to block distribution. With a tractor-trailer blocking the campus's exit one morning, staff used a crane to get newspapers over a wall and onto backup de-

livery trucks. In November two men found Mr. Lai among the democracy demonstrators and pelted him with rotten meat.

Attacks on Jimmy Lai highlight the erosion of press freedom.

This history may explain Mr. Lai's unsurprised response to Monday morning's firebombs. "I am fine. I am not scared," he said. "These things always happen. They are only provocations."

Mr. Lai's courage is admirable, but Molotov cocktails represent an escalation toward deadly violence. Worse, no reassurance has come from Hong Kong's leaders. Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying offered no comment Monday. Regina Ip, who aspires to win the top job through Beijing's rigged selection process in 2017, condemned the violence but mused that its cause was some "personal" issue unrelated to press freedom.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lai is due at police headquarters later this month to answer a summons concerning his role in last year's 75-day "illegal assembly." Prosecutors haven't revealed their plans for Mr. Lai and his fellow demonstrators, but harsh indictments would invite questions about the many unsolved cases of violence against pro-democracy publishers and journalists. Even when courts hand down convictions, as in the 2008 assassination plot or last year's stabbing of former newspaper editor Kevin Lau, they typically find only hitmen, never masterminds.

Violence against journalists and the corruption of law enforcement have become regular themes in Hong Kong since the handover to Chinese rule. The destruction of the city's freedoms highlights the importance of Mr. Lai's fight for democracy.

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EUROPE

Charlie Hebdo's Defiant Muhammad Cover Fuels Debate on Free Speech

By DAN BILEFSKY JAN. 13, 2015

PARIS — Immediately upon unveiling its new cover — a depiction of Muhammad — the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo on Tuesday reignited the debate pitting free speech against religious sensitivities that has embroiled Europe since 12 people were killed during an attack on its Paris offices by Muslim extremists a week ago.

The cover shows the bearded prophet shedding a tear and holding up a sign saying, “I am Charlie,” the rallying cry that has become synonymous with support of the newspaper and free expression. Above the cartoon on a green background is the headline: “All is forgiven.”

While surviving staff members, at an emotional news conference, described their choice of cover as a show of forgiveness, most Muslims consider any depiction of their prophet to be blasphemous. Moreover, interpretations quickly swirled around the Internet that the cartoon also contained disguised crudity.

One of Egypt's highest Islamic authorities warned that the cartoon would exacerbate tensions between the secular West and observant Muslims, while death threats circulated online against staff members.

A preacher, Anjem Choudary, the former leader of a radical group that was banned in Britain, was quoted by Britain's Independent newspaper as saying that the image was “an act of war” that would be punishable by death if judged in a Shariah court.

Beyond new threats — and the potential for more violence after a week in which both mosques and Jewish sites were attacked — the persistence of what many in the Muslim community see as continuing provocations opened complaints about a

double standard in European countries, whose bans on hate speech some see as seeming to stop short of forbidding ridicule of Islam.

"If freedom of expression can be sacrificed for criminalizing incitement and hatred, why not for insulting the Prophet of Allah?" Mr. Choudary wrote last week on Twitter on the same day as the massacre at Charlie Hebdo, during which the attackers indicated they were avenging Muhammad for the newspaper's insults.

Supporters of the iconoclastic newspaper defended it as a fitting and defiant tribute to its slain cartoonists. "I have no worries about the cover," the cartoonist who drew the cover, Renald Luzier, who uses the pen name Luz, told assembled reporters at the offices of the newspaper Libération, which the Charlie Hebdo staff has used since the attack. "We have confidence in people's intelligence and we have confidence in humor. The people who did this attack, they have no sense of humor."

"I'm sorry we've drawn him yet again," he added, "but the Muhammad we've drawn is a man who is crying."

Laurent Léger, an investigative journalist with Charlie Hebdo, shrugged off the idea, circulating on social media, that the cartoon contained one or even two hidden renderings of male genitals. "People can see what they want to see, but a cartoon is a cartoon," he said. "It is not a photograph."

Muslim leaders as far away as Egypt condemned Charlie Hebdo, recalling threats received by a Danish newspaper in 2005 after it, too, published cartoons satirizing Muhammad.

Elsa Ray, the spokeswoman of the Paris-based Collective Against Islamophobia in France, declined to react specifically to the new cartoon, but said that cartoons that lampooned Muhammad breached the limits of decency and insulted Muslims. "The freedom of expression may be guaranteed by the French Constitution, but there is a limit when it goes too far and turns into hatred, and stigmatization," she said.

Moreover, she argued that the failure of French courts to clamp down on cartoons satirizing Muhammad was a double standard, given the robustness of action taken when cartoonists or artists insulted Jews, including Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, a comedian, who in 2013 came under the scrutiny of courts which banned a series of his shows.

Mr. M'bala M'bala has said it was a shame that a Jewish journalist had not been killed in the gas chambers. He has also come under fire for popularizing a gesture that strongly resembles a Nazi salute.

In a statement on his Facebook page after Sunday's enormous unity march in Paris, Mr. M'bala M'bala expressed his admiration for Amedy Coulibaly, the gunman behind the killings at a kosher supermarket. "As far as I am concerned, I feel I am Charlie Coulibaly," he wrote, alluding to the "I am Charlie" rallying cry. The Paris prosecutor's office said Monday it had opened an investigation to determine if Mr. M'bala M'bala should be charged with promoting terrorism.

Mr. M'bala M'bala said that he was being unfairly targeted.

French laws safeguard the freedom of speech, but there are many exceptions to the rule.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls told the National Assembly on Tuesday that "blasphemy" was not in French law and never would be. But he refused to draw any analogy between the satirists of Charlie Hebdo and Mr. M'bala M'bala.

"There is a fundamental difference," he said.

Some cultural observers praised Charlie Hebdo for upholding Western values of liberal democracy, even at risk of violence. Flemming Rose, the former cultural editor of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, whose 2005 publication of cartoons lampooning Muhammad — including one with his turban depicted as a lit fuse — drew violent recriminations that reverberated across the world, recalled that the publication of the cartoons resulted in a fatwa against him by a radical cleric, threats against the newspaper and one of its cartoonists, and attacks against Danish embassies in the Middle East.

Mr. Rose said in an interview that *Jyllands-Posten* had decided not to publish the latest Charlie Hebdo caricature for fear the newspaper would be targeted again. Still, he said it was imperative that Western newspapers not surrender to Islamic radicals.

"We aren't republishing the Charlie Hebdo cartoons because we are afraid," he said. "But I know well that if you give in to intimidation, it works."

His comments reflect the debate that last's week attacks have ignited in newsrooms and in the streets and cafes in Europe.

Jérôme Fenoglio, the managing editor of *Le Monde*, said his paper had decided to publish the Charlie Hebdo cartoon on its cover because "it is an important document that we wanted to show to everybody." The cartoon, Mr. Fenoglio said, "didn't carry any insulting message."

"We defend our right to be able to publish any cartoon, but never those which would be aggressive," Mr. Fenoglio said. Though he said that some of Charlie Hebdo's caricatures were "not funny" and could "uselessly" offend people, "each paper makes its own judgment."

"Freedom of the press is an absolute right," Mr. Fenoglio said, "but each paper has its own free will, and chooses what seems pertinent or not."

Some American newspapers, including The New York Times, did not reproduce the Charlie Hedbo cartoons that mocked Islam. The Times called the decision an editorial judgment that reflected its standards for content that is deemed offensive and gratuitous.

The decision drew criticism from some free-speech advocates who called it cowardly in the face of a terrorist attack, which the newspaper disputed.

"Actually, we have republished some of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, including a caricature of the head of ISIS, as well as some political cartoons," Dean Baquet, the executive editor of The Times, said in a statement. "We do not normally publish images or other material deliberately intended to offend religious sensibilities."

The Washington Post, which published a single previous Charlie Hebdo cartoon of Muhammad on its printed op-ed page last Thursday, republished the new cover on its website on Tuesday. Martin Baron, the newspaper's executive editor, said the images did not violate its editorial standards.

"It has to be deliberately, pointedly, needlessly offensive," Mr. Baron said.

More publications have published or plan to reproduce Charlie Hebdo's newest cover online. Three million copies of the newspaper will be published on Wednesday in 16 languages.

The proliferation of the cartoons is heightening concern that the already precarious climate in Europe will worsen, with the possibility of more violence. Some newspapers that reproduced the cartoons in solidarity after last week's attack have themselves been threatened or targeted already.

A Belgian newspaper, Le Soir, received an anonymous call Sunday from someone threatening that "it's going to blow in your newsroom."

The same day, in Germany, stones and an incendiary object were thrown through the windows of the Hamburg Morgenpost newspaper headquarters, damaging the archive but causing no injuries.

Khalil Charles, spokesman for the Muslim Association of Britain, said free speech had been allowed to defy common sense and had given way to insults. “Referring to last week’s attacks, he added: “Muslims are appalled, like everyone, about what happened. But this is criminality that should not be attached to Islam, and the Prophet should not be attacked as a result.”

Reporting was contributed by Maïa de la Baume and Alan Cowell from Paris, Kareem Fahim and Merna Thomas from Cairo, and Rick Gladstone and Ravi Somaiya from New York.

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EUROPE

New Charlie Hebdo Cover Creates New Questions for U.S. News Media

By RICK GLADSTONE and RAVI SOMAIYA JAN. 13, 2015

After the killings at the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo last week by Islamist extremists, other news media, including web-based outlets, chose to republish some of its cartoons that many Muslims found so offensive.

Some American newspapers, including The New York Times, did not, calling the decision an editorial judgment. They drew criticism from some free-speech advocates who called the decision cowardly in the face of a terrorist attack.

This week, American newspapers are confronting a variation of that choice: whether to republish the cover-page cartoon of the new Charlie Hebdo print edition, due out Wednesday.

It shows a tearful caricature of the Prophet Muhammad holding the by-now iconic “Je suis Charlie” (“I am Charlie”) placard with the words “Tout est pardonné” (“All is forgiven”) above him. Many viewed the cartoon image as a conciliatory message from the new editors of Charlie Hebdo after the carnage of the Paris attack.

Others, however, said the new cover continues a Charlie Hebdo tradition of intentionally offending Muslims by depicting their prophet, an act that many Muslims consider blasphemous.

The choice to republish the image (The Times, again, is not) goes to the heart of the debate about what constitutes free expression versus gratuitous images that at least some viewers find offensive, newspaper executives and other journalists said.

They also said the choice touches on differences in American and French standards for offensiveness. It is further complicated by a legitimate news reason — Charlie Hebdo’s response to the deadly assault — that would seem to justify showing precisely what the newspaper did in its response.

“Newspapers have to consider their audience, who reads their publication,” said Martha Steffens, a professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and an executive board member at the International Press Institute, an advocacy group. “Every news outlet is not going to make the same decision.”

Professor Steffens, who was coincidentally visiting Paris last week with some students when the attacks took place, said that what might be different in the decision making this week was the newsworthiness of the Charlie Hebdo attack and its aftermath.

“This is newsworthy because it’s the cover of a newspaper after a terrible tragedy,” she said.

At The Times, which republished some Charlie Hebdo cartoons in its coverage of the attack, but not the ones that mocked Islam, an editorial decision was made in its online coverage to provide a link for viewers to click should they wish to see the new Muhammad cover. But the image will not be published in the print edition.

“Actually we have republished some of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons including a caricature of the head of ISIS as well as some political cartoons,” Dean Baquet, executive editor of The Times, said in a statement. “We do not normally publish images or other material deliberately intended to offend religious sensibilities. Many Muslims consider publishing images of their prophet innately offensive and we have refrained from doing so.”

Other news outlets took a different approach. BuzzFeed, the online news site, ran previous Charlie Hebdo cartoons deemed offensive by Muslims and featured an image of the Wednesday cover in an article about how other publications were dealing with it. The BuzzFeed article portrayed those who chose not to republish as practicing self-censorship.

The Washington Post, which published a single image of a previous Charlie Hebdo cartoon of Muhammad on its printed op-ed page last Thursday, republished the new cover on its website on Tuesday. Martin Baron, the newspaper’s executive editor, said the images did not violate its editorial standards.

“It has to be deliberately, pointedly, needlessly offensive,” Mr. Baron said.

In France, other newspapers have rallied to aid Charlie Hebdo. Its latest issue has been assembled in the offices of the left-wing newspaper Libération, some of whose staff members posted the image on Twitter earlier this week. In London, the newspaper The Guardian published the cartoon, but a web version of its article

warns readers that it “contains the image of the magazine cover, which some may find offensive.”

Adding to the debate over publishing the cartoon, some online commentators have also asserted that, if viewed upside down, the image could be seen as a depiction of the male anatomy. Many previous Charlie Hebdo images satirizing religious leaders have also included subtle or explicit pornographic references.

Laurent Léger, an investigative journalist with Charlie Hebdo, shrugged off the idea, circulating on social media, that the new cartoon of Muhammad contained one or even two drawings of male genitals.

“People can see what they want to see, but a cartoon is a cartoon. It is not a photograph. Who’s to say what Muhammad looks like. I haven’t seen him myself,” Mr. Leger said.

Joel Simon, the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, a New York-based advocacy group, said he was concerned that the debate over the Charlie Hebdo cartoons had conflated the issues of free-speech and editorial judgment.

“Some people agree, some disagree, but I don’t think there’s evidence to suggest the decision was made because of threats of violence,” he said.

“Here’s the thing that troubles me: This is a time when, regardless of your decision to publish or not, we need to stand together behind the principle of freedom of expression. I’d hate to see this become divisive.”

Dan Bilefsky contributed reporting from Paris.

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Readers Sound Off to Public Editor on Decision Not to Publish Cartoons

By Margaret Sullivan

January 14, 2015 3:50 pm

I've seen intense response from Times readers before. When I wrote about the test drive of a Tesla electric car, or Nate Silver's offer to place a bet on his prognostications, hundreds of readers commented and emailed. When I wrote about coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, readers certainly let me know what they thought.

But nothing compares with the response over the past few days over The Times's decision not to publish cartoons of Muhammad from the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, where a terrorist attack killed eight staff members last week in Paris.

After my post, explaining the executive editor's reasoning and calling for a review of standards, went up last Thursday, response began quickly. Running heavily against the decision not to publish, it quickly reached several hundred.

A New York reader, whose commenting handle is Tom, put it succinctly. "By not publishing the subject cartoons, The Times fails in its primary purpose: reporting the news."

My news assistant, Joumana Khatib, moderated the comments and continued to do so over the weekend. I was reading each one with great interest. By Tuesday afternoon, there were about 700. And, separately, plenty of email arrived. My second

post on the subject went online Wednesday morning, making the case for the newsworthiness of the new Charlie Hebdo cover.

The executive editor, Dean Baquet, told me that he, too, was reading the comments, and he described them to me as eloquent and thoughtful. He said he understood fully that many readers disagreed vehemently with his decision; meanwhile, he was answering as much of his own voluminous email on the subject as he could.

I felt, as I often do, that Times readers have an intense emotional reaction to their newspaper — and that they express their strong beliefs with passion and intelligence. It's sometimes overwhelming, but always heartening, to hear what they have to say.

International New York Times

<http://nyti.ms/1xYcc6q>

MIDDLE EAST

Newspaper in Israel Scrubs Women From a Photo of Paris Unity Rally

By JODI RUDOREN JAN. 13, 2015

JERUSALEM — Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany was right there next to the president of France on Sunday, marching through the streets of Paris for all the world to see — all the world, that is, except the readers of an ultra-Orthodox newspaper in Israel.

The newspaper, HaMevaser, altered a front-page photograph of the march to remove Ms. Merkel and other female leaders, setting off snickers and satire on social media.

Ultra-Orthodox publications generally avoid pictures of women for reasons of modesty, and their intended audience has been known to scratch women's faces out of bus advertisements and to bar them from running for public office in their parties. But some people saw the deletions from the Paris photograph as a more serious sin.

"It is rather embarrassing when, at a time that the Western world is rallying against manifestations of religious extremism, our extremists manage to take the stage," Allison Kaplan Sommer commented on a blog for Israel's left-leaning newspaper Haaretz. She berated HaMevaser for "denying the fact that in the wider world, beyond the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, women do stand on the world stage and shape events."

Apparently deleted along with Ms. Merkel were: the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo; a European Union official; and Simonetta Sommaruga, the president of Switzerland.

The altered photo, first pointed out by Walla, an Israeli news site, drew wide scrutiny. Rather than just blur the women's faces, HaMevaser tried to make it appear as though no women had been there to begin with. The results were far from seamless: Mediaite called the alterations "sloppy," citing the discoloration of a man's

face, a disembodied hand, a mysterious glove and an unexplained blur, and posted a comparison with the unaltered original.

An Irish satirical news source, Waterford Whispers, responded by posting its own “feminist newspaper photoshop,” featuring the same Paris street scene with three female leaders depicted, but no men.

Newspapers catering to ultra-Orthodox Jews have been embarrassed before by their handling of news photographs depicting women. In 2011, Di Tzeitung, a Brooklyn-based publication, apologized for digitally altering a photograph to remove Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was then secretary of state, and another woman from a scene in the White House Situation Room.

No one from HaMevaser could be reached on Tuesday, including the owner, Meir Porush, a former member of Parliament. The newspaper, established in 2009, publishes up to eight pages daily and 20 pages on Fridays, focusing on current affairs. Its Thursday section “For the Home” is aimed at women.

Rama Burshtein, an ultra-Orthodox filmmaker whose 2012 movie “Fill the Void” won international acclaim, said in an interview that the alteration of the photo would make perfect sense to the newspaper’s readers.

“It’s very, very, very, very, very hard for a nonreligious person to understand the purity of eyes,” Ms. Burshtein said. “By us, men don’t look at women’s photos, period. As long as you don’t know that, then it sounds ridiculous, or changing history or events. But we’re not here to get the events the way they are. We are here to keep the eyes.”

Gabby Sobelman contributed reporting from Jerusalem, and Robert Mackey from New York.

Islam's Problem With Blasphemy

By Mustafa Akyol

WILL "moderate Muslims" finally "speak up" against their militant coreligionists? People around the world have asked (but, as in the past, have not all seriously examined) this question since last week's horrific attacks on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and on a kosher supermarket in Paris.

In fact, Muslim statesmen, clerics and intellectuals have added their voices to condemnations of terror by leaders around the world. But they must undertake another essential task: Address and reinterpret Islam's traditional take on "blasphemy," or insult to the sacred.

The Paris terrorists were apparently fueled by the zeal to punish blasphemy, and fervor for the same cause has bred militancy in the name of Islam in various other incidents, ranging from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's fatwa against the writer Salman Rushdie in 1989 to the threats and protests against the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten for publishing cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad in 2005.

Mockery of Muhammad, actual or perceived, has been at the heart of nearly all of these controversies over blasphemy.

This might seem unremarkable at first, but there is something curious about it, for the Prophet Muhammad is not the only sacred figure in Islam. The Quran praises other prophets — such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus — and even tells Muslims to "make no distinction" between these messengers of God. Yet for some reason, Islamist extremists seem to obsess only about the Prophet Muhammad.

Even more curiously, mockery of God — what one would expect to see as the most outrageous blasphemy — seems to have escaped their attention as well. Sa-

Mustafa Akyol is a contributing opinion writer and the author of "Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty."

tirical magazines such as Charlie Hebdo have run cartoons ridiculing God (in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim contexts), but they were targeted with violence only when they ridiculed the Prophet Muhammad.

Of course, this is not to say extremists should threaten and harm cartoonists for more diverse theological reasons; obviously, they should not target them at all. But the exclusive focus on the Prophet Muhammad is worth pondering. One obvious explanation is that while God and the other prophets are also sacred for Judaism and Christianity, the Prophet Muhammad is sacred only for Muslims. In other words, the zeal comes not from merely respect for the sacred, but from

Muslims should simply ignore insults to their faith, the Quran says.

NY Times 1/14/15
militancy for what's sacred to us — us being the community of Muslims. So the unique sensitivity around Muhammad seems to be a case of religious nationalism, with its focus on the earthly community — rather than of true faith, whose main focus should be the divine.

Still, this religious nationalism is guided by religious law — Shariah — that includes clauses about punishing blasphemy as a deadly sin. It is thus of vital importance that Muslim scholars courageously, even audaciously, address this issue today. They can begin by acknowledging that, while Shariah is rooted in the divine, the overwhelming majority of its injunctions are man-made, partly reflecting the values and needs of the seventh to 12th centuries — when no part of the world was liberal, and other religions, such as Christianity, also considered blasphemy a capital crime.

The only source in Islamic law that all

Muslims accept indisputably is the Quran. And, conspicuously, the Quran decrees no earthly punishment for blasphemy — or for apostasy (abandonment or renunciation of the faith), a related concept. Nor, for that matter, does the Quran command stoning, female circumcision or a ban on fine arts. All these doctrinal innovations, as it were, were brought into the literature of Islam as medieval scholars interpreted it, according to the norms of their time and milieu.

Tellingly, severe punishments for blasphemy and apostasy appeared when increasingly despotic Muslim empires needed to find a religious justification to eliminate political opponents.

One of the earliest "blasphemers" in Islam was the pious scholar, Ghaylan al-Dimashqi, who was executed in the 8th century by the Umayyad Empire. His main "heresy" was to insist that rulers did not have the right to regard their power as "a gift of God," and that they had to be aware of their responsibility to the people.

Before all that politically motivated expansion and toughening of Shariah, though, the Quran told early Muslims, who routinely faced the mockery of their faith by pagans: "God has told you in the Book that when you hear God's revelations disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse; surely then you would be like them."

Just "do not sit with them" — that is the response the Quran suggests for mockery. Not violence. Not even censorship.

Wise Muslim religious leaders from the entire world would do Islam a great favor if they preached and reiterated such a nonviolent and nonoppressive stance in the face of insults against Islam. That sort of instruction could also help their more intolerant coreligionists understand that rage is a sign of nothing but immaturity. The power of any faith comes not from its coercion of critics and dissenters. It comes from the moral integrity and the intellectual strength of its believers. □

The New York Times

11/16/15

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Wrong Responses to Charlie Hebdo

Leaders in Europe are justifiably trying to figure out what they should be doing to prevent terrorist attacks like the recent massacre at the satirical French newspaper Charlie Hebdo. Regrettably, some politicians are proposing the kind of Internet censorship and surveillance that would do little to protect their citizens but do a lot to infringe on civil liberties.

In Paris, a dozen interior ministers from European Union countries including France, Britain and Germany issued a statement earlier this week calling on Internet service providers to identify and take down online content "that aims to incite hatred and terror." The ministers also want the European Union to start monitoring and storing information about the itineraries of air travelers. And in Britain, Prime Minister David Cameron suggested the country should ban Internet services that did not give the government the ability to monitor all encrypted chats and calls.

Even before the Charlie Hebdo attack, European leaders were proposing or enacting harsh measures. For example, the French Parliament passed a law in September that allows the authorities to temporarily seize the passports and identity cards of citizens who seem intent on joining foreign terrorist organizations. And this week, French officials said they had arrested 54 people for hate speech, including a controversial comedian.

Appealing as these measures may sound in the aftermath of a tragedy, they are deeply flawed. Countries like France and Germany have long had stricter controls on speech than the United States. For example, their governments have in the past forced Internet firms like Yahoo and Twitter to take down Nazi propaganda. But those decisions are generally made by government officials or judges, not technology companies.

Internet service providers do not have the staff or the skill to determine what content is likely to lead to terrorist attacks. That is why a blanket mandate to censor terrorism-related information could force these businesses to err on the side of caution and take down information that might be offensive but would not lead to an imminent attack. In fact, an Internet service provider might well have

taken down satirical cartoons of the kind Charlie Hebdo published.

Besides, even if Internet companies blocked videos and other propaganda produced by terrorist groups from their networks, that action would not necessarily prevent Europeans from finding that information. Terrorist sympathizers could access the banned content relatively easily by using virtual private networks or proxy servers that allow users in one country to pretend they are in a different country, like the United States, where free speech laws are much stronger. Some Europeans are already using such tools to access American services, like Netflix, that are not yet available in their countries.

Mr. Cameron's proposal raises another set of problems. In a speech earlier this week, he said he wanted companies like WhatsApp and Snapchat to create back doors in their services that would allow intelligence services to monitor conversations between users. If the companies refused to comply, he said, they should not be allowed to operate in Britain. Such an approach might seem reasonable to some — after all, the police can wiretap a landline phone, so why not a messaging service?

But technology and privacy advocates say it is dangerous to require technology companies to build such surveillance mechanisms into communications services because hackers and criminals will inevitably find ways to use those back doors to steal information from individuals, corporations and governments.

Mr. Cameron's proposal would make the Internet less secure without necessarily hampering terrorists. People who are determined to communicate with each other in secret can download encryption software from the Internet and send messages through systems like Tor that obscure their identities and locations.

Of course, governments can and should take steps to identify threats and prevent terrorist attacks through targeted intelligence gathering. But there is good reason to believe that widespread censorship and intrusive surveillance will only undermine personal freedoms and could even make us less secure.

POSTOPINION

Blaming the Victim

Charlie Hebdo & free speech



NICOLE GELINAS

If a young woman wearing a short skirt and high heels walks down a dangerous street late at night, does she have it coming to her when she gets kidnapped, raped and murdered?

Far too many people have made an equivalent "they had it coming" argument about the Charlie Hebdo murders in Paris. Time to wake up!

Seventeen innocent people died horrifically bloody deaths over cartoons. Few things in life are absolute, but this one is: There is no "perspective" here.

Yes, everyone was resolute and united during Paris' historic march a week ago. But by the next afternoon, the main story at The New York Times site was that the satirical French magazine's new Mohammed cover was "fueling a debate on free speech."

A "high Islamic authority" in Egypt said the cartoon would "exacerbate tensions." A French anti-Islamophobia group insisted "there is a limit when [free expression] goes too far." A similar group in Britain complained that "free speech had been allowed to defy common

sense," the Times reported.

Yes, yes, you must report the news — although it's hard to see the Times blithely printing a comment saying "wearing a short skirt goes too far" after a brutal rape and murder because it's "common sense" that men can't control their sexual desire.

And what about the pope? Gethurting to one of his assistants, Pope Francis said last week, "[he] says a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal."

Reporting the story, The Financial Times headlined it, "Pope backs free speech, but faith is off limits," as if these two phrases can possibly go together.

Actually, there is no "debate" over free speech. Either you have it or you don't.

And contrary to the Pope's cute vignette, it's sort of a main tenet of Western civilization that you don't answer words with violence.

Lots of smart people like the Times' David Brooks have taken this opportunity to point out that the dead French cartoonists' drawings were dumb or racist, anyway.

In other words, as if death weren't punishment enough, the victims must come in for intellectual criticism. And how does that argument apply to the murders at



It really is that simple: A woman outside the French embassy in Berlin last week at a rally in support of the victims shows what's at stake.

the Jewish market — is it that kosher food doesn't taste good?)

The other "blame the victim" line is that France had it coming, because it is, um, an imperfect Western nation.

Yes, yes, isolated housing projects were a bad idea; high youth unemployment is sad; racism is bad. French people are rude. So what? Almost no one who must put up with those conditions resorts to mass murder.

This strain doesn't hold up terrifically, anyway, when applied to other situations:

● Was the 2013 Boston bombers' alienation the fault of liberal

Cambridge, where they grew up?

● Did America fail by failing to integrate the self-styled ISIS jihadist who tried to kill two New York cops with an ax last October?

● How 'bout the guy who attacked a man in Brooklyn synagogue in December — with cops killing him to save an innocent life? Did America fail that jihadist, too?

All of this victim-blaming isn't just revolting. It's dangerous. If you're just asking for your body to be blown apart by an automatic weapon if you draw a cartoon — or if don't make everyone in your society perfectly happy, then:

● What if you're a religious Jew who wears a skullcap? That, too, is free expression. But do you only have yourself to blame by making it easier for a violent anti-Semite to pick you out of the crowd?

● Should a sweet blonde be allowed to jog through a predominantly Muslim neighborhood wearing Spandex instead of a niqab? Blaming the dead for their own murders is dangerous in another way, too.

Nobody with power likes free speech. If you write for a living, you learn that important people will try almost anything to get things in print or keep them out of print.

Today, it's maybe irresponsible — and therefore should be illegal? — to print a Mohammed cartoon. Tomorrow, maybe it'll be irresponsible to criticize a wartime president or prime minister.

To get an idea of how tempting it is for power to censor, consider that more than half of American colleges restrict campus speech, vaguely prohibiting things like "inappropriate expression."

The dead cartoonists, in the end, were right. If you can't put pen to paper without risking death, you can't do anything freely.

To make one exception means to make them all.

Now let's see how many supposed defenders of speech will just stop there . . . instead of adding the "but, but, but" that shows they don't believe in free expression when it really counts — when people just died for it.

Nicole Gelinas is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's City Journal.